

THE THEME OF JOHN'S THREE EPISTLES

Of this John was said in the theme before his Gospel. Now here follow his three Epistles: one to all Catholics, though some ancients do call it, *Ad Parthos* (to the Parthians): the other two being very short, unto a certain lady, and to one Gaius; The effect of all is, to witness unto them the certainty of the Catholic faith, and to exhort them to continue still in it: and also to love the Catholic Church, and so, neither to become heretics, nor schismatics: but rather to avoid all such, as the forerunners of Antichrist, and to remember, that Catholics need not to go to school to any such masters, having at home in the Catholic Church, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit himself, who was given to the Church visibly in the beginning, to lead her into all truth, and to continue with her forever. Therefore he said: That which you have heard from the beginning, let it abide in you. Likewise a little after, v. 27, and epistle 2. v. 6. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you walk in the same, because many seducers are gone out into the world, and v. 8 and 9. And not only thus in general, but also in particular he expresses the points which the heretics did then call in question. Some were about Christ himself: for they denied that Jesus is Christ, that he is the very Son of God, that he is incarnate, Ep. 1. 2:22. and Ep. 2. v- 7. And against such it was that he wrote his Gospel also, as he there signifies, John 20:31. Other points are about our justification, against only faith, and for good works, as also Augustine noted, whose words were cited before. Hereupon he said: If we say, we have society with God, and walk in darkness, we lie, Epist. 1. c. 1. Again, He that said he knows God, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar. Again, This is the charity of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not heavy. Finally, Children, let no man seduce you, he that does justice is just, even as he it just. Epist. 1. c. 3:7, 8, 9. Likewise c. 2:29, and indeed in all the three Epistles throughout, he does inculcate good works and keeping the commandments against the heresy of only faith.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN THE APOSTLE

CHAPTER 1

Good cause there is to believe the Apostle's preaching. 5 And this is one point of their preaching, that to have participation with God, we must not only believe, but also abstain from all mortal sin, 8 though we all sin venially.

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life: 2 and the life was manifested: and we have seen, and do testify, and declare unto you the life eternal which was with the Father, and has appeared to us. 3 That which we have seen and have heard, we declare unto you, that you also may have *society with us, and our society may be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things we write to you, that you may rejoice, and your joy may be full. 5 And this is the annunciation which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, That *God is light, and in him there is no darkness. 6 If we shall say that we have society with him, and walk in darkness: we lie, and do not the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he also is in the light, we have society one toward another, and *the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 *If we shall say that we have no sin, we seduce ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins: he is faithful and just, for to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity. 10 If we shall say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

1:3 society- Challoner has ‘fellowship’ 1:5 Jn. 8:12 1:7 Heb. 9; 1 Pet. 1; Apoc. 1 1:8 2 Kings 8:46; 2 Chron. 6:36

3. May have society. St. John showed manifestly, that whosoever desire to be partakers with God, must first be united to the Church's society, learn that faith, and receive those Sacraments which the disciples received of the Truth itself, conversant with them in flesh. So said Venerable Bede upon this place. By which we see there is no society with God in sects or schisms, nor anywhere but in the unity, fellowship, and communion of that Church which can prove itself to descend from the apostles.

7. The blood of Jesus. Whether sins be remitted by prayers, by fasting, by alms, by faith, by charity, by sacrifice, by Sacraments, and by the priests (as the Holy Scriptures do plainly attribute remission to every one of these) yet none of all these do otherwise remit, but in the force, by the merit and virtue of Christ's blood: these being but the appointed means and instruments by which Christ will have his holy blood to work effectually in us. Which means whosoever despises, deprives himself of the benefit of Christ's own blood and continues still in sin and uncleanness, boast he himself ever so much of Christ's death. Which point let the Protestants mark well, and cease to beguile their poor deceived followers, persuading them that the Catholics derogate from Christ's blood, or seek remission otherwise than by it, for that they use humbly the means appointed by Christ to apply the benefit of his holy blood unto them.

From all sin. From original and actual, venial and mortal, *a culpa et poena*, that is, from the fault and pain due to the same. Venerable Bede said, that Christ's passion does not only remit in baptism the sins before committed, but all other afterwards also done by frailty: yet so, if we use, for the remission of them, such means as are requisite and as Christ has appointed, of which he reckons some. Bede upon this place. See St. Augustine, also upon this place, to 9. and St. Jerome, (*li. 2. con. Pelag. c. 3*)

8. That we have no sin. We gather by these words and the former, that there are two sorts of sin: one mortal, excluding us from light and the society of God; another venial, which is found even in those that walk in the light, and are in the society of God. Also we note against the Pelagian, that we are truly called the sons of God, and so just indeed, though we be not without all sins, every one of us, as well just as unjust, being taught and bound to confess our offences, and to ask pardon daily of God, by this petition of

the *Pater noster* (Our Father), Forgive us our debts. Therefore St. Augustine, (*li. de natura & grat. c. 36*) reckoned up all the holy patriarchs, prophets, and renowned just persons, to have been sinners, even when they were in grace and justice: excepting always our Blessed Lady, *de qua propter honorem Domini, nullam prorsus, cum de peccatis agitur, habere volo quaesitionem*; of whom, said he, for the honor of our Lord, when we talk of sins, I will have no question. And Pelagius asking what sins Abel and such just men did commit, St. Augustine answered, that they might laugh sometimes immoderately, or jest too much, or covet somewhat intemperately, or pluck fruit over greedily, or in eating take somewhat more than afterwards was well digested, or have their intention in time of prayer somewhat distracted, and such like. Thus in sense St. Augustine. By which we may learn, which are venial sins, which consist with true justice and cannot always be avoided even of holy men in this life. In the book (*de fide ad Petrum, c. 41*) are excepted from this common rule of sinners, the children who are newly baptized and have not yet use of reason to sin either mortally or venially.

Chapter 2

If any sin mortally, he must not despair. 3 To know God rightly, is not to believe only, but to keep his commandments; 7 and that this is no new doctrine, but the very primitive, though a new life it is. 9 Therefore he that believes must also love his brethren: 12 and that men must not love the world, but do that which God wills. 18 Many are gone out of the Church and become Seducers, all the ministers of Antichrist: but true Christians must continue in their old faith, considering the reward, and that they need not go to school to any Heretics, the Holy Spirit himself being the Schoolmaster of the Church: he does earnestly inculcate justice and good works.

1 My little children, these things I write to you, that you sin not. But and if any man shall sin, we have an *Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just. 2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world's. 3 And in this we know that we have known him, if we observe his commandments. 4 He that says he knows him, and keeps not his commandments: is a liar, the truth is not in him. 5 But he that keeps his word, in him in very deed the charity of God is perfected: in this we know that we be in him. 6 He that says he abides in him: ought even as he walked, himself also to walk. 7 My dearest, I write not a new commandment to you, but an old commandment, which you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you have heard. 8 Again *a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true both in him and in you: because the darkness is passed, and the true light now shines. 9 He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother: is in the darkness even until now. 10 *He that loves his brother, abides in the light, and scandal is not in him. 11 But he that hates his brother: is in the darkness, and walks in the darkness, and knows not where he goes, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. 12 I write unto you little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name. 13 I write unto you fathers, because you have known him which is from the beginning. I write unto you young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. 14 I write to you infants, because you have known the Father. I write unto you young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one. 15 Love not the world, nor those things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him, 16 because all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and

the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passes and the concupiscence thereof. But he that does the will of God, abides forever. 18 Little children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that *the Antichrist comes: now there are become many antichrists: whereby we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us: but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would surely have remained with us: but that they may be manifest that they are not all of us. 20 But you have the *unction from the Holy One, and know all things. 21 I have not written to you as to them that know not the truth, but as to them that know it: and that no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is a liar, but he which denies that Jesus is not Christ? This is Antichrist which denies the Father and the Son. 23 Every one that denies the Son, neither has he the Father. He that confesses the Son, has the Father also. 24 You, that which you have heard from the beginning, let it abide in you. If that abide in you which you have heard from the beginning, you also shall abide in the Son and the Father. 25 And this is the promise which he promised us, life everlasting. 26 These things have I written to you concerning them that seduce you. 27 And you, the unction which you have received from him, let it abide in you. And you have no need that any man teach you: but as his unction teaches you of all things, and it is true, and it is no lie. And as it has taught you, abide *in him. 23 And now little children abide in him: that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be confounded of him in his coming. 29 If you know that he is just, you know that everyone also which does justice, is from of him.

2:1 Advocate- παρακλητος 2:8 Jn. 13:34; 15:12 2:10 1 Jn. 3:14 2:18 the Antichrist- ο αντιχριστος 2:20 unction- χρισμα/Chrism; The New American Bible has 'anointing' 2:27 in him- or in it

1. That you sin not. St. John (said Venerable Bede upon this place) is not contrary to himself, in that he seeks here to make them without sin, whom he said in the last chapter could not be without all sins: but in the former place he warned us only of our frailty, that we should not arrogate to ourselves perfect innocence; here he provokes us to watchfulness and diligence in resisting and avoiding sins, especially the greater, which by God's grace may more easily be repelled.

An Advocate. The calling and office of an advocate, is in many things proper to Christ, and in every condition more singularly and excellently agreeing to him than to any angel, saint, or creature living: though these be rightly and truly so called, and that not only without all derogation, but much to the honor of Christ's advocacy. To him solely and only it agrees to procure us mercy before God's face, by the general ransom, price, and payment of his blood for our delivery, as is said in the sentence following, And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world's. In which sort he is our only Advocate, because he is our only Redeemer. And hereupon he alone immediately, by and through himself, and without the aid or assistance of any other, man or angel, in his own name, right and merits, confidently deals in our causes before God our Judge, and so procures our pardon, which is the highest degree of advocation that can be. All which notwithstanding, yet the angels, and saints, and our companions alive, may and do pray for us, and in that they deal with God by intercession to procure mercy for us, may justly be called our advocates: not so as Christ is, who demands all things immediately by his own merits, but as secondary intercessors, who never ask nor obtain any thing for us, but *per Christum Dominum nostrum*, by and through Christ our common Lord, Advocate, and Redeemer of mankind. And behold how St. Augustine (*tract. 1. in ep. Jn. upon these very words*) prevented the heretics complaints. *Sed dicet aliquis, etc.* "But some man will say, do not the saints then pray for us? Do not bishops then or prelates and pastors pray for the people? Yes said he: mark the Scriptures, and you shall find that the Apostles prayed for the people, and again desired the people to pray for them, and so the Head prays for all, and the members one for another." And likewise (lest the heretics should say, there is a difference between the living and the dead in this case) thus the same holy Church Father wrote upon the 75th Psalm in fine. "Our Lord Jesus Christ does yet make intercession for us, all the martyrs that are with him, pray for us: neither will their intercession cease, till we cease our groanings." In this sense therefore whosoever prays for us, either alive or dead, is our advocate, as St.

Augustine (ep. 59 to. *Paulinus circa med.*) called bishops the people's advocates, when they give them their benediction or blessing. So does the Holy Church call our blessed Lady our Advocate, by the very words of St. Irenaeus, that you may see such speeches are no new inventions of the latter ages, but apostolical. The obedient Virgin Mary (said he) is made the advocate of the disobedient virgin Eve. And to confound the Protestants plainly, in that they think or pretend that the advocation or patronage of saints should be injurious to Christ, remember that our Savior acknowledged angels to be deputed for the protection (which is nothing else but advocation) of infants before the face of God, besides the plain examples in the Old Testament, Gen. 48:16. Tob. 5:27 and ch. 12:12. Dan. 10. And this not only the Catholic Church, but the very English Protestants themselves in their service book and in the Collect of Michaelmas-day, profess and pray for the same protection or advocation of angels, and defend the same against their younger brethren the Puritans.

2. For the whole world's. St. Augustine gathered from this against the Donatists, and all other heretics, that would drive the Church into corners or some certain countries from the universality of all nations (where it was named by the apostles, Catholic) that the true religion, and Church, and consequently the effects of Christ's propitiation, death, and advocation, appertain not to one age, nation, or people, but to the whole world. St. Augustine upon this place, (to. 9 tract. 1 . in ep. Jn.)

4. Says he knows. To know God here, signifies (as it does often in the Scriptures) to love, that is, as in the last chapter, to be in society with him, and to have familiar, and experimental knowledge of his graces. If any boast himself thus to know God, and yet keeps not his commandments, he is a liar, as all Calvinists and Lutherans, that profess themselves to be in the favor of God by only faith, affirming, that they neither keep, nor possibly can keep his commandments.

16. concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life. How all sin and temptation proceed from these three, see St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summe. 1.2. quast. 77. ars. 5.*)

18. Many antichrists. The holy apostle St. John (said St. Cyprian) did not put a difference between one heresy or schism and another, nor meant any sort that especially separated themselves, but generally called all, without exception, Antichrists, that were adversaries to the Church, or were gone out from the same. And a little after, "It is evident that all are here called antichrists, that have divided themselves from the charity and unity of the Catholic Church." So he wrote, (ep. 76. nu. 1. ad Magnum) By which we may learn that all heretics, or rather arch-heretics, are properly the precursors of that one and special Antichrist, who is to come at the last end of the world, and who is called here immediately before, that peculiar and singular Antichrist.

19. They went out from us. An evident note and mark, whereby to convince all heretics and false teachers, to wit, that being once of the common Catholic Christian fellowship, they forsook it, and went out from the same. Simon Magus, Nicholas the Deacon, Hymenaeus, Alexander, Philetus, Arius, Macedonius, Pelagius, Nestorius, Eutyches, Luther, Calvin, and the like, were of the common society of all us that are Christian Catholics, they went out from us, whom they saw to live in unity and faith and religion together, and made themselves new conventicles, therefore they were (as the apostle here showed) antichrists, and we and all that abide in the ancient fellowship of Christian religion, that went not out of their fellowship, in which we never were, nor out of any other society of known Christians, cannot be schismatics or heretics, but must needs be true Christian Catholic men. Let our adversaries tell us out of what church we ever departed, when, and where, and under what persons it was that we revolted, as we can tell them the year, the places, the ringleaders of their revolt.

They were not of us. He meant not, that heretics were not, or could not be in or of the Church, before they went out and fell into their heresy or schism: but partly that many of them, who afterwards fall out, though they were before with the rest, and partakers of all the Sacraments with others their companions, yet indeed were of naughty life and conscience when they were within, and so being rather as ill humors and superfluous excrements, than true and lively parts of the body, after a manner may be said not to have been of the body at all. So St. Augustine expounded these words in his commentary upon this place, tract 3, but elsewhere, more agreeably as it seems, that the apostle meant, that such as will not tarry in the Church, but finally forsake it to the end, in the prescience of God, and in respect of the small benefit they shall have by their temporal small abode there, are not of or in the Church, though, according to this present state, they are truly members of it. (*Li. de corrept. & gr. c. 9 and de dono persever. c. 8*)

That they may be manifest. God permitted heresy to be, that such as are permanent, constant, and chosen members and children of the Catholic Church, only known to God before, may now also be made manifest to the world, by their constant remaining in the Church, when the wind and blast of every heresy and temptation drives out the other light and unstable persons.

20. Know all things. They that abide in the unity of Christ's Church, have the unction, that is, the Holy Spirit, who teaches all truth. Not that every member or man of it has all knowledge in himself personally, but that everyone, who is of that happy society to which Christ promised and gave the Holy Spirit, is partaker of all other men's gifts and graces in the same Holy Spirit, to his salvation. Neither need any to seek truth at heretics hands or others that are gone out, when it is within themselves, and only within themselves in God's Church. If you love unity (said St. Augustine) for you also have him, whosoever has anything in it. Take away envy, that is yours which I have, that is mine which you have, etc. (*Tract. 32. in Evang. Joan*)

Chapter 3

It is not for the Son of God, to sin mortally, but for the sons of the devil, whereby they are known one from another, and not by only faith. 11 True faith is, that we also love our brethren, giving both our love and substance for them. 19 Such unfeigned love may have great confidence before God. 23 Because the keeping of his Commandments does much please him, which consist in faith and charity.

1 See what manner of charity the Father has given us, that we should be named and be the sons of God. For this cause the world does not know us, because it has not known him. 2 My dearest, now are we the sons of God: and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is. 3 And every one that has this hope in him sanctifies himself, as he also is holy. 4 Everyone that commits sin, commits also iniquity: and sin is iniquity. 5 And *you know that he appeared to take away our sins: *and sin in him there is none. 6 Every one that abides in him, sins not: and every one that sins, has not seen him, nor known him. 7 Little children, let no man seduce you. He that does justice, is just: even as he also is just. 8 *He that commits sin, is of the Devil: because the Devil sinned from the beginning. For this, appeared the Son of God, that he might dissolve the works of the Devil. 9 Every one that is born of God, commits not sin: because his seed abides in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 In this are the children of God manifested, and the children of the Devil. Everyone that is not just, is not of God, and he that loves not his brother. 11 Because this is the annunciation, which you have heard from the beginning, *That you love one another. 12 Not as *Cain, who was of the wicked, and killed his brother. And for what cause he killed him? Because his works were wicked: but his brother's just. 13 Marvel not brethren, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we are translated from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loves not, abides not in death. 15 Whosoever hates his brother: is a murderer. And you know that no murderer has life everlasting abiding in himself. 16 *In this we have known the charity of God, because he has yielded his life for us: and we ought to yield our lives for the brethren. 17 *He that shall have the substance of the world, and shall see his brother have need, and shall shut his bowels from him: how does the charity of God abide in him? 18 My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth. 19 In this we know that we are of the truth: and in his sight we shall persuade our hearts. 20 For if our heart do reprehend us: God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. 21 My dearest, if our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence toward God. 22 And *whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of him: because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing before

him. 23 And *this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ: and love one another, as he has given commandment unto us. 24 And *he that keeps his commandments, abides in him, and he in him. And in this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us.

3:5 Is. 53:4; 1 Pet. 2:24 3:8 Jn. 8:44 3:11 Jn. 13:15 3:12 Gen. 4:8 3:16 Jn. 15:13 3:17 Jam. 2:15 3:22 Mt. 21; Jn. 14; 1 Jn. 5 3:23 Jn. 17:3; 13:34 3:24 Jn. 14:23

1. The sons of God. Not by nature, as Christ is, but by adoption.

3. Sanctifies himself. This teaches us that man sanctifies himself by his free will working together with God's grace. See Augustine upon this place.

4. Sin is iniquity. Iniquity is not taken here for wickedness, as it is commonly used both in Latin and in our language, as is plain by the Greek word *avouia*, signifying nothing else but a swerving or declining from the straight line of the law of God or nature. So that the apostle means that every sin is an obliquity or defect from the rule of the law: but not contrary, that every such swerving from the law should be properly a sin, as the heretics do untruly gather, to prove that concupiscence remaining after baptism is a very sin, though we never give our consent unto it. And though in the fifth chapter following, verse 17, the apostle turn the speech, affirming every iniquity to be a sin, yet there the Greek word is not the same as before: by which it is plain that there he means by iniquity, man's actual and proper transgression which must needs be a sin. (See *St. Augustine cont. Julian*, *li. 5. c. 3.* *St. Ambrose, li. de Apologia David*, *c. 13*)

6. Sins not. Jovinian and Pelagius falsely (as heretics used to do) argued upon these words and those that follow verse 9; the one, that the baptized could sin no more: the other, that no man being or remaining just, could sin. But among many good senses given of this place, this seems most agreeable, that the apostle should say, that mortal sin does not consist together with the grace of God, and therefore cannot be committed by a man continuing the son of God. And so is the like speech in the ninth verse following to be taken. See *St. Jerome (li. 2. cont. Jovinia num. c. 1)*

7. He that does justice. He does inculcate this often, that man's true justice or righteousness consists in doing or working justice, and that so he is just, and bids them not to be seduced by heretics in this point.

8. Sinned from the beginning. The Devil was created holy and in grace, and not in sin: but he fell of his own free will from God. Therefore these words from the beginning may be interpreted thus, from the beginning of sin, and so the apostle will say, the Devil committed the first sin. So *St. Augustine (li. 11. de civ. Dei, c. 15)* expounded it. The most natural meaning seems to be, that he sinned from the beginning of the world, not taking the beginning precisely for the first instant or moment of the creation, but straight upon the beginning, as it must needs also be taken in *St. John's Gospel*, ch. 8:44.

17. See his brother have need. Every man is bound to give alms according to his abilities, when he sees his brother in great necessity.

22. We shall receive of him because. Let the Protestants be ashamed to say, that we obtain all from God by only faith, the apostle here attributing it to the keeping of God's commandments. Note here also that God's commandments are not impossible to be kept, but were then, and are now observed by good men.

23. Love one another. Lest any man should think the words next before, only faith in Christ to be commanded or to please God, he adds to faith the commandment of charity or love of our neighbor.

Chapter 4

We may not believe all that boast of the spirit, but try them, whether they teach the Catholic articles of faith, namely the incarnation of Christ: whether their doctrine be not worldly, and themselves disobedient hearers of the Apostles. 7 We must love one another, considering the exceeding love of God in sending his Son to save us. 17 An argument of perfect charity is, if we have nothing in our conscience to fear in the Day of Judgment. 19 And an argument that we love God is, if we love our brethren.

1 My dearest, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits if they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 2 In this is the spirit of God known, every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ to have come in flesh, is of God? 3 And every spirit that dissolves Jesus, is not of God? And this is *Antichrist, of whom you have heard that he comes, and now he is in the world. 4 You of God, little children, and have overcome him, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. 5 They are of the world: therefore of the world they speak, and the world hears them. 6 We are of God. *He that knows God hears us: he that is not of God, hears us not, in this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. 7 My dearest, let us love one another: because charity is of God. And every one that loves is born of God, and knows God. 8 He that loves not, knows not God, because God is charity. 9 *In this has the charity of God appeared in us, because God has sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we may live by him. 10 In this is charity: not as though we have loved him, but because he has loved us, and sent his Son a propitiation for our sins. 11 My dearest, if God has so loved us: we also ought to love one another. 12 *God no man has seen at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and his charity in us is perfected. 13 In this we know that we abide in him, and he in us: because he of his Spirit has given to us. 14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son the Savior of the world. 15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 And we have known and have believed the charity, which God has in us. God is Charity: and he that abides in charity, abides in God, and God in him. 17 In this is charity perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the Day of Judgment: because as he is, we also are in the world. 18 Fear is not in charity: but perfect charity casts out fear, because fear has painfulness, and he that fears is not perfect in charity. 19 Let us therefore love God, because God first has loved us. 20 If any man shall say, that I love God: and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he that loves not his brother whom he sees: God whom he sees not, how can he love? 21 *And this commandment we have from God: that he which loves God, love also his brother.

4.3 Antichrist- το τον αντιχριστον 4:6 Jn. 8:47; 10:17 4:9 Jn. 3:16 4:12 Jn. 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16 4:21 Jn. 13:34; 15:12

1. Believe not every spirit. That is, receive not every doctrine of such as boast themselves to have the spirit. For there be many false prophets, that is to say, heretics, which shall go out of the Church, and challenge the spirit, and vaunt of God's word, Scripture, and Gospel which indeed be seducers.

Prove the spirits. It is not meant by this place, as the Protestants would have it, that every particular person should of himself examine, try, or judge who is a true or false doctor, and which is true or false doctrine. But the Apostle here would everyone to discern these diversities of spirits, by taking knowledge of them to whom God has given the gift of discerning spirits and doctrines, which Paul expressly said is given but to some, and not to everyone, (1 Cor. 12) and by obeying the Church of God, to whom Christ has given the Spirit of truth. And this is only the sure way to prove the spirits and doctrines of these days. And all they that would bring us from our pastors and the Church's judgment, to our own private trial, seeking nothing else but to drive us to miserable uncertainty in all our belief, as Calvin does, who upon this place said that private men may examine the General Council's doctrines.

2. Every spirit that confesses. The Apostle speaks according to that time, and for that part of Christian doctrine which then was especially to be confessed, taught, and maintained against certain wicked heretics, Cerinthus, Ebion, and the like, that taught wickedly against the person and natures of Christ Jesus. The Apostle therefore gives the faithful people this token to know the true teachers of those days from the false. Not that this mark would serve for all times, or in case of all other false doctrines, but that it was then a necessary note. As if a good Catholic writer, pastor, or parents would warn all theirs now in these days, to give ear only to such teacher, as acknowledge Christ our Savior to be really present, and sacrificed in the Blessed Mass, and that all such are true preachers and of God, the rest to be of the Devil, or to be counted the spirit of Antichrist. Which spirit of Antichrist, he said, was come even then, and is no doubt much more now in all heretics, all be precursors of that great Antichrist which shall come towards the latter end.

3. That dissolves. To dissolve, loose, or separate Jesus asunder, was proper to all those old heretics that taught either against his divinity or humanity, or the unity of his person, being of two natures, as Cerinthus, Ebion, Nestorius, Eutyches, Manes or Manicheus, Cerdon, Apelles, Apollinaris, and the like. And this is one place by which we may see that the common Greek copies be not ever authentical, and that our old approved translation may not always be examined by the Greek that now is, which the Protestants only follow: but that it is to be presupposed, when our old Latin text differs plainly from the Greek, that in old time either all, or the more approved Greek reading was otherwise, and that often the said Greek was corrupted then, or since by Heretics, or otherwise. For of the Greeks, Irenaeus (*Lib. 3. cap. 18*): among the Latin Fathers Augustine (*tract 6. in fine*) Leo (*epist. 10. cap. 5*) and Venerable Bede did read as we do, and this reading makes more against the said heretics, than that which the common Greek now has, to wit, every spirit that confesses not Christ to have come in the flesh is not of God, which is also in effect said before verse 2. And that therefore it was corrupted and altered by heretics, see the words of Socrates also a Greek writer, very agreeable to this purpose. Nestorius, said he, being eloquent by nature, which is often in heretics, accounted himself therefore learned, and disdained to study the old interpreters, counting himself better than them all: being ignorant that in John's Catholic epistle the old Greek, copies had, EVERY ONE THAT DISSOLVES JESUS IS NOT OF GOD. So said he, adding moreover that such as would separate the divinity from the dispensation of Christ's humanity, took out of the old copies this sense, for which the old expositors noted that these which would loose Jesus, had corrupted this Epistle. Tripar (*lib. 12. c. 4*)

6. In this we know. This is the most sure and general mark to know the true spirits and prophets from the false: that those which be of God, will hear and obey their Apostles and lawful pastors succeeding the Apostles, and submit themselves to the Church of God: the other, that be not of God, will not hear either Apostle, Pastor, or Church, but be their own judges.

12. No man has seen. No man in this life, nor with corporal eyes, can see the proper essence or substance of the Deity. (*See Augustine ad Paulin. De videae Dec. ep. 112*)

17. That we may have confidence. Confidence called in Latin *Fiduria*, is neither all one with faith, nor a persuasion infallible that makes a man no less secure and certain of his salvation, than of the things that we are bound to believe, as the Protestants falsely teach: but it is only a hope well corroborated, confirmed, and strengthened upon the promises and grace of God, and the party's merits. And the words both following and going before, prove also evidently against the Protestants, that our confidence and hope in the Day of Judgment depends not only upon our apprehension of Christ's merits by faith, or upon his grace and mercy, but also upon our conformity to Christ in this life, in charity and good works. And that is the doctrine of Peter when he said, Labor, that by good works you may make sure your vocation and election, and Paul's meaning, when he said, I have fought a good fight, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, when our Lord will render to me in that day, a just judge.

18. Fear is not in charity. The heretics very falsely understand this place so, that Christian godly men ought to have no doubt, mistrust, or fear of hell and damnation. Which is most evidently against the Scriptures, commanding everywhere unto us the awe and fear of God and his judgments. Fear him, said our Savior, (Matt. 10) that can cast body and soul into hell. And Psalm 118, Pierce my flesh with fear. Which fear of God's judgments caused Paul, and all good men to chastise their bodies, lest they should be reprobate and damned. And the wise man for this cause affirms him to be happy, that is ever fearful. And holy Job said, I feared all my works. And the Apostle, With fear and trembling work out your salvation. Which kind of fear is even in the most just men and most full of charity consisting well with the same virtue, and is called *Filiahs timor*, because it is such as the good child ought to have toward his father. But there is a kind of fear which stands not with charity, and is clean against hope also, that which brings such perplexity and anxiety of conscience, that it induces a man to mistrust or despair of God's mercies. That servile fear also which makes a man often to leave sinning and to do the external works of justice, not for any love or delight he has in God or his laws, but only for fear of damnation, though it be not ill in itself, but very profitable, as that which helps toward the love of God, yet it stands

not with charity neither, but is daily more and more lessened, and at length quite driven out by charity. Of these kinds of fears then the Apostle speaks, and, as some expound, of the fear of men also, of which our Savior said, Fear not them that kill the body.

Chapter 5

They that love God, must love his natural son Jesus, and his sons by adoption, and keep his commandments, which to the regenerate are light, 4 But not unless they continue in the Catholic faith, namely of this article, that Jesus is the Son of God, and therefore able to give us life everlasting, 14 and all our petitions, 16 and our prayers for all our brethren that sin not unto death, dying in their mortal sins by impenitence. Last of all he warns them not to communicate with Idols.

1 Whosoever believes that Jesus is Christ, inborn of God. And every one that loves him which begat: loves him also that was born of him. 2 In this we know that we love the children of God, when as we love God, and keep his commandments. 3 For this is the charity of God that we keep his commandments: *and his commandments are not heavy. 4 Because all that is born of God, overcomes the world, and this is the victory which overcomes the world, our faith. 5 Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 6 This is he *that came by water and blood Jesus Christ: not in water only, but in water and blood. And it is the Spirit which testifies, that Christ is the truth. 7 For there be three which give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three be one. 8 And there be three which give testimony in earth: the Spirit, water, and blood, and these three be one. 9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, because this is the testimony of God which is greater, that he has testified of his Son. 10 *He that believes in the Son of God, has the testimony of God in himself. He that believes not the Son, makes him a liar: because he believes not in the testimony which God has testified of his Son. 11 And this is the testimony, that God has given us life everlasting. And this life is in his Son. 12 He that has the Son, has life: he that has not the Son of God, has not life. 13 These things I write to you, that you may know that you have eternal life which believe in the name of the Son of God. 14 And this is the confidence which we have toward him: that, *whatsoever we shall ask according to his will, he hears us. 15 And we know that he hears us whatsoever we shall ask: we know that we have the petitions which were quest of him. 16 He that knows his brother to sin a sin not to death, let him ask, and life shall be given him, sinning not to death. There is a sin to death: for that I say not that any man ask. 17 All *iniquity is sin. And there is a sin to death. 18 We know that everyone which is born of God, sins not: but the generation of God preserves him, and the wicked one touches him not. 19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world is set in wickedness. 20 And we know that the Son of God comes: and he *has given us

understanding, that we may know the true God, and may be in his true Son. This is the true God, and life everlasting. 21 My little children, keep yourselves *from Idols. Amen.

5.3 Mk. 11.30 5.5 1 Cor. 15.57 5.10 Jn. 3.36 5.14 Mt. 7.7; 21.22; 1 Jn. 3.22 3.17 Iniquity- αδικία; to death- not to death 5.20 Lk. 24.45
3.21 from idols- τούς ειδωλούς

3 His commandments are not heavy. How can the Protestants say that God's commandments cannot possibly be fulfilled or kept in this life, seeing the Apostle said, they be not heavy: and Christ said, his yoke is sweet, and his burden light? (*Augustine de perfectione justitiae, c. 10*) The heretics in favor of their foresaid error, rather translate, His commandments are not grievous: than, are not heavy.

7. Three which give testimony. An express place for the distinction of three persons, and the unity of nature and essence in the blessed Trinity: against the Arians and other like heretics, who have in divers ages found themselves so pressed with these plain Scriptures, that they have, as it is thought, altered and corrupted the text both in Greek and Latin many ways: even as the Protestants handle those texts that make against them. But because we are not now troubled with Arianism so much as with Calvinism, we need not stand upon the variety of reading or expositions of this passage. Jerome in his Epistle put before the seven Canonical or Catholic Epistles.

16. A sin to death. A sin to death is another thing than a mortal sin: for it is that mortal sin only, whereof a man is never penitent before his death, or in which he continues till death, and dies in it. I affirm, said Augustine (*de correptione and grat. cap. 12*) that a sin to death is to leave faith working by charity even till death. So likewise in the words before, a sin not to death, is not that which we call a venial sin, but any that a man commits and continues not therein till death.

For that I say not. If the sin to death whereof he speaks, be the sin wherein a man dies without repentance, according to Augustine's words, before rehearsed: then the prayer which he speaks of, must needs be prayer for the dead, because he speaks of praying, or not praying, for them that died in deadly sin, exhorting us to pray, and encouraging us to do it with confidence to be heard, if we pray for them that departed this life not in deadly sin: and contrariwise in manner dissuading and discouraging us from praying for such as continued in wickedness even to their lives' end. Augustine sets down the Church's practice agreeable to the Apostle's meaning, (*lib. 21. cap. 24. De Civit Dei*). If there be any, said he, that persist till death in impenitence of heart, does the Church now pray for them, that is, for the souls of them that so are departed? And this is the cause that *Concilium Bracharensis primum, cap. 34* forbade to pray for such: as die in desperation, or kill themselves: and the reason why the Church forbears to pray for heretics that die in their heresy, or maintain heresy unto death, and by their death. And that the place is most properly or only meant of praying for the departed, this convinces, that neither the Church nor any man is refrained here from praying for any sinner yet living, nor for the remission of any sin in this life: all sins, of what sort so ever, being pardonable, so long as the committers of them be in case and state to repent: as they be, so long as they be in this world. And we see that the Church prays, and is often heard, for heretics, Jews, Turks, apostates, and what other infidels or ill men so ever during their lives. And it is great blasphemy that the Calvinists utter upon this place: to wit, that Apostasy and certain other sins of the reprobate, cannot be forgiven at all in this life. Which they hold, only to avoid the sequel of praying for the dead, upon these words of John, besides that they must take upon them presumptuously, to know and discern of God's secrets, who be reprobate, and who be not, and according to that pray for some, and not for others, all which is most wicked and absurd presumption. As for their allegation, that Jeremiah the Prophet was forbidden to pray for the Jews, and warned that he should not be heard, Cap. 7. 11. 14. there is great difference, first, he had a revelation by the words of God, that they would continue in their wickedness, as we have not of any certain person, whereof John here speaks; secondly, Jeremiah was not forbidden to pray for the remission of their sins, nor had denial to be heard therein for any man's particular case whereof the Apostle here speaks: but he was told that they should not escape the temporal punishment and affliction which he had designed for them, and that lie would not hear him therein

31 . From idols. It is so known a treachery of heretics to translate *Idola* Images, as here and in a number of places, especially in the English Bible printed the year 1562, that we need not much to stand upon it. As this also is seen to all the world, that they do it of purpose to seduce the poor ignorant people, and to make them think, that whatsoever in the Scriptures is spoken against the idols of the Gentiles, which the prophet called *Simulacra Gentium*, is meant of pictures, sacred images, and holy memories of Christ and his saints. Against such seducers, the second sacred Council of Nicea, called the seventh Synod, decreed thus, Act. 4. Fag. 122. *Anathema to all them that bring the sentence of the holy Scripture touching idols, against the venerable images, * Anathema to them that call the venerable images, idols; Anathema to them that say, Christians adore images as Gods.*

Now in their later translations, the heretics perceiving that the world seeing their dishonest dealing, corrected themselves in some places, and in this place have put idols, in the text: but to give the people a watchword that the Church's images are to be comprised in the word, idols, they have put images, in the margin. But concerning this matter, it is most evident that neither every idol is an image, nor every image an idol: and that howsoever the origin or etymology of the word, idol, may be taken in the Greek, yet both the

words and the things be in truth and by the use of all tongues, far differing. The great dragon that the Babylonians adored, Dan. 14, was an idol, but not an image: the Cherubins in Solomon's Temple were images, but not idols, and the face of the Queen inner coin or elsewhere, as Caesar's face upon the coin that Christ called for, is an image, but not an idol: and the heretics dare not translate that text of Scripture thus. Whose idol is this superscription? Nor call the Queen's image, the idol of the Queen: nor Christ, the idol of his Father: nor woman, the idol of the man: nor man, the idol of God, all which in Scripture be named images for all that, and be so indeed, and not idols. Which convinces, that the heretics be false and corrupt translators in this place, and other the like, confounding these two words, as if they were all one. But as for the having of images or portraits of holy things, not only in private houses, but also in churches, God himself does warrant us, who commanded even the Jews themselves, a people most prone to idolatry, and that after he had given them a special precept of not having, making, or worshipping of idols, to make the images of angels, the cherubins, and that in the sovereign holiest place of adoration that was in the Temple, and about the Ark, yes and in respect of which sacred images partly, they did, as Jerome said (*epist. 17. cap. 3*) so great reverence to the holy place called *Sancta sanctorum*. If they then were warranted and commanded to make, and have in so great reverence the images of mere spirits or angels, whose natural shape could not be expressed: how much more may we Christians have and reverence the images of Christ, his Blessed Mother, the Apostles and other saints, being men, whose shape may be expressed? So does the said Nicene Council argue against the heretics, which at that time were the adversaries of images. And note here, that eight hundred years ago, they were straight counted heretics that began to speak against images, and that Council was called purposely for them, and condemned them for heretics, and confirmed the former ancient reverence and use of sacred images, which began even in our Savior's time or little after, when good religious folks for love and reverence made his image, namely, the woman that he healed of the bloody flux: which image also was approved by miracles, as Ecclesiastical history tells, and namely Eusebius (*Ecccl. hist. lib. 7. cap. 14*) who also witnessed that the images of Peter and Paul were in his days, as you may see also in Augustine (*lib. deconcess. Evangelist, cap. 10*) that their pictures commonly stood together in Rome, even as at this day. Of our Lady's image see Gregory (*lib. 7. epist 5. indict. 2. ad Januar. and epist. 53*). In whom also, (*lib. 7. epist. 109*) you may see the true use of images, and that they are the books of the unlearned, and that the people ought to be instructed and taught the right use of them, even as at this day good Catholic folks do use them to help and increase their devotion, in all Catholic churches: yes the Lutherans themselves receive them still. St. John of Damascus wrote three books in defense of sacred images against the aforesaid heretics.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN THE APOSTLE

He commends the Lady and her sons for continuing in the old faith, bidding them so to do hereafter also, lest they lose the reward of their works in the day of Judgment: and to love the true believers, but with heretics to have no society: expressing also the points then in controversy.

1 The senior to the Lady elect and her children whom I love in truth, and not I only, but also all that have known the truth. 2 For the truth which abides in us, and shall be with us forever. 3 Grace be with you, mercy, peace from God the Father, and from Christ Jesus the Son of the Father in truth, and charity. 4 I was exceedingly glad, because I have found of your children walking in truth, as we have received commandment of the Father. 5 And now I beseech you Lady, not as writing a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning, *that we love one another. 6 And this is charity that we walk according to his commandments. For this is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you walk in the same. 7 Because many seducers are gone out into the world, which do not confess Jesus Christ to have come into flesh: this is a seducer and an antichrist. 8 Look to yourselves, that you lose not the things which you have wrought; but that you may receive a full reward. 9 Every one that revolts, and persists not in the doctrine of Christ: has not God. He that persists in the doctrine: the same has both the Father, and the Son. 10 If *any man come to you, and bring not this doctrine: receive him not into the house, nor say, God save you, unto him. 11 For he that says unto him, God save you, communicates with his wicked works. 12 Having more things to write unto you, I would not by paper and ink: for I hope that I shall be with you, and speak mouth to mouth: that your joy may be full. 13 The children of your sister elect salute you.

5 Jn. 15:12; 1 Jn. 3:11 10 Rom. 16:17

6. From the beginning. This is the rule of a Christian Catholic man, to walk in that faith and worship of God which he has received from the beginning. Which is that which we now call, according to the Scriptures, the tradition of the apostles: that which is come to us from man to man, from bishop to bishop, and so from the apostles. So shall a faithful man avoid seducers that rise up in every age, teaching new doctrine.

8. Reward. Reward for keeping fast the Catholic faith.

9. Revolts. To go back or revolt from the received truth and doctrine Apostolical is damnation.

10. This doctrine. The apostles, and true pastors their lawful successors, and the Church of God in holy council, use to set down the true doctrine in those points which heretics call into controversy, which being once done and declared to the faithful, they need no other mark or description to know a heretic or false teacher by, but that he comes with another doctrine than that which is set down to them. Neither can the heretics shift themselves, as now-a-days they would do, saying, O let us first be proved heretics by the Scripture, let them define a heretic. No, this is not the apostle's rule. Many a good honest shepherd knows a wolf that cannot define him. But the apostle said, If he bring not this set doctrine, he is a seducer. So holy Church said now, Christ is really in the Blessed Sacrament, under form of bread and wine, etc. If therefore he bring not this doctrine, he is a seducer and a heretic, and we must avoid him, whether in his own definitions and censures he seems to himself a heretic or not.

Receive him. Though in such times and places where the community or most part be infected, necessity often forced the faithful to converse with such in worldly affairs, to salute them, to eat and speak with them, and the Church by decree of council, for the more quietness of timorous consciences, provided, that they incur not excommunication or other censures for communicating in worldly affairs with any in this kind, except they be by name excommunicated or declared to be heretics: yet even in worldly conversation and secular acts of our life, we must avoid them as much as we may, because their familiarity is many ways contagious and noisome to good men, namely to the simple: but in matter of religion, in praying, reading their books, hearing their sermons, presence at their service, partaking of their sacraments, and all other communicating with them in spiritual things, it is a great damnable sin to deal with them.

Nor say, God save you. St. Irenaeus (*li. 3. c. 3.*) reported a notable story of this holy apostle touching this point, out of St. Polycarp, which is this, There are some (said he) that have heard Polycarp say, that when John the disciple of our Lord was going to Ephesus, into a bath, to wash himself, and he saw Cerinthus the heretic within the same, he suddenly leapt out, saying that he feared lest the bath should fall, because Cerinthus the enemy of truth was therein. So said he of St. John, and added also a like worthy example of St. Polycarp himself, who on a time meeting Marcion the heretic, and the said Marcion calling upon him and asking him whether he knew him not: Yes, said Polycarp, I know you for Satan's son and heir. So great fear (said Irenaeus) had the apostles and their disciples to communicate in word only with such as were adulterers or corrupters of the truth, as St. Paul also warned, when he said, A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, avoid. So far Irenaeus. If then to speak with them or salute them, is so earnestly to be avoided according to the apostle's example and doctrine: what a sin is it to flatter them, to serve them, to marry with them, etc.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN THE APOSTLE

He commands Gaius, for continuing in the truth, and for sustaining or succoring true preachers, 9 noting Diotrepe for the contrary, and praising Demetrius.

1 The senior to Gaius the dearest, whom I love in truth. 2 My dearest, concerning all things I make my prayer that you proceed prosperously, and fare well, as your soul does prosperously. 3 I was exceedingly glad when the brethren came, and gave testimony to your truth even as you walk in truth. 4 Greater thank have I not of them, than that I may hear my children do walk in truth. 5 My dearest, you do faithfully whatsoever you work on the brethren, and that upon strangers. 6 They have rendered testimony to your charity in the sight of the Church; whom, you shall do well, bringing on their way in manner worthy of God. 7 For, for his name did they depart, taking nothing of the Gentiles. 8 We therefore ought to receive such: that we may be *coadjutors of the truth. 9 I had written perhaps to the church: but he that loves to bear primacy among them, Diotrepe does not receive us. 10 For this cause, it I come, I will advertise his works which he does: with malicious words chatting against us, and as though these things suffice him not: neither himself does receive the brethren, and them that do receive he prohibits, and casts out of the church. 11 My dearest, do not imitate evil, but that which is good. He that does well, is of God: he that does ill, has not seen God. 12 To Demetrius testimony is given of all, and of the truth itself, yes and we give testimony: and you know that our testimony is true. 13 I had many things to write unto you: but I would not by ink and pen write to you. 14 But I hope forthwith to see you, and we will speak mouth to mouth. Peace be to you. The friends salute you. Salute the friends by name.

4 thank- pleasure; χ αραν 8 coadjutors- Challoner has ‘fellow helpers’ 10 I will advertise- commonebo/ υπομνησω

5. And that upon strangers. A great grace to be beneficial to strangers, especially to them that are of our Catholic faith, and suffer for the same.

9. Primacy among them. It seems (said Ven. Bede) he was an arch-heretic or proud sect-master.

10. I will advertise. That is, I will rebuke them, and make them known to be wicked. Bede.

